

**Abstract 642**

**TITLE:** The Decomposition of Relative HIV Risk Contributions: The Results of a Paired-Couples Intervention

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**ISSUE:** HIV/STD risk assessment surveys have ordinarily been done with one-sex samples or dual sex samples that do not permit the matching of sex partners. The results from these studies have consistently indicated that more men than women engage in risk behaviors and that the level of risk among men is higher than the level of risk among women. From these observations it has generally been deduced that men bring greater risks to sexual encounters than women. Thus, the implications have been that HIV/STD interventions for couples need to be designed more from the perspective of enhancing the protection of women than of men.

**SETTING:** Data were collected from 1998 to 1999 from approximately 200 African-American, Hispanic, white non-Hispanic, and ethnically mixed sexually active couples that were recruited from Ft. Lauderdale and Miami, Florida. To be eligible participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 55 and were at risk of HIV/STD contraction due to either their own or their partners' behavior.

**PROJECT:** We use paired-couples data to develop a three component (Substance Use and Sex, Sexual History, and Partner Risk Awareness) index of HIV/STD risks using standard survey items and develop profiles of women who have sex with men at varying levels of risk and men who have sex with women at varying levels of risk. Particular attention is given to the extent to which partner selection is risk biased; the extent to which paired partners are similar or different in their levels of risk. Data for this analysis come from the pilot phase of a project designed to develop and test an HIV/STD prevention intervention for couples. Subjects were selected by gender and ethnically matched trained recruiters. The recruitment procedure for obtaining this sample of ethnically diverse, sexually active couples began by recruiting a female first (and having her bring her main male sex partner into the study) and by recruiting a male first (and having him bring his main female sex partner into the study). Matched partners were privately given a pretest that took approximately two hours. Partners were assured that all information would be kept confidential and not disclosed to their partner or any other person or organization.

**RESULTS:** Data analysis is currently being conducted.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** The increased risks that one experiences with respect to HIV/STD contraction is due to the risks that one's partner brings to the relationship. The increased risk that couples experience are contributed to by both partners. This research allows the detection and decomposition of the relative risk contributions of both the male and female partners of heterosexual relationships.

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